



Proponent Testimony by Nicholas Minekime on House Bill 197

CEO, Sunrise Mountain Partners LLC
House Public Utilities Committee
September 20, 2023

Chairman Stein, Vice-Chair Blasdel, Ranking Member Weinstein, and members of the House Public Utilities Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit proponent testimony on behalf of House Bill 197 (HB 197), a bill to support the development of Community Solar in Ohio.

I write to you as the CEO of Sunrise Mountain Partners, a solar development company with a profound commitment to Ohio's energy future. I have experience in the development, ownership, and operation of 50 sun farms around the country.

I was raised in Dublin, and graduated from Dublin Coffman High School. I built Sunrise Mountain Partners to pursue bringing solar to my home state in order to bring tax revenue to our local schools, towns, and counties. I recognize the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead as Ohio continues to evolve and adapt in the face of changing energy needs and increasing energy demand.

I have signed long-term leases with 25 landowners from Zanesville to Wauseon, Delta, and Pike in Fulton County to the village of Sheffield in Lorain County to Barlow Township in Washington County. Our typical landowner comes from a multi-generational line of farmers, would like to keep farming the remainder of their land, and sees solar as an additional crop yield for their property.

Take Steve Gerfen, for example, a sheep, hog, and cattle farmer in Marion County whose family will provide a vegetative maintenance contract where he will graze his 800 ewes under our panels. His sons, Nole and Clay, plan to expand their flock and pursue grazing other solar projects in the state. Along with the Gerfen family, we will continue to consult with the sheep specialist at the Farm Bureau and the Ohio State University College of Agriculture.

The projects will provide clean, reliable energy and tax revenue directly to the towns and communities they will inhabit. We estimate that each of our small community sun farms will bring \$10 million to the community, with tens of thousands of dollars going directly to tax revenue.

On behalf of Sunrise Mountain Partners, I stand firmly behind House Bill 197. This bill signifies a critical opportunity for Ohio to embrace renewable energy, drive economic growth, and build a more resilient future for our state and electrical grid. This bill aligns perfectly with our mission of providing clean, reliable energy solutions that strengthen communities and safeguard our environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony on behalf of HB 197. I am happy to answer your questions.

Sincerely,

Nick Minekime